

The meeting of RELAF with Brother Superior General and his Council begins in Abidjan (Ivory Coast)



With the participation of 32 Brothers of the Christian Schools and five Lay Lasallian Partners, the **meeting of the Lasallian Region of Africa-Madagascar (RELAF) with Brother Superior General and his Council** began on Monday, 13 November in the city of Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

“It is with great joy that we welcome you to the *land of Éburnie*”, said Brother Valère Adonsou at the beginning of the meeting, on behalf of the Regional Team. “Welcome to Abidjan, the Pearl of the Lagoons, the economic capital of Côte d’Ivoire,

Akwaba, welcome!

The joy of encounter

“The name of the city of Abidjan refers to the people who used to live there, the *Bidjanes*. Hence Abidjan: **‘the land of the *Bidjanes*’,**” Brother Valère narrated, referring also to a legend about the origins of the city: “Some Europeans, seeking their way, came across a woman cutting leaves from a tree. The Europeans asked

the woman the name of the place where they were. Not understanding their language, the woman thought they wanted to know what she was doing there. Her answer, simple and obvious, was: *min-tchan m'bidjan*, which in Ebyrean means 'I cut leaves'. So her interlocutors chose the word *Abidjan*.

“We feel encouraged and we are convinced that our meeting will be rich in understanding, mutual enlightenment and fruitful guidelines”, added Br Valère, recalling that the origin of the Lasallian presence in Ivory Coast, 45 years ago, is also linked “to a fortunate encounter between the Bishop of Daloa, Mgr Pierre-Marie Coty, and our Superior General” - at that time, Br José Pablo Basterrechea.



Lasallian Presence in Africa-Madagascar

Currently the Lasallian Mission on the African continent encompasses 20 countries among which “there are significant differences from one country to another, from one group of countries to another”. **81 Lasallian communities in the Region run 107 educational works serving more than 78,000 students.** This mission is led by 430 Brothers together with 5,194 teachers, all “committed to quality education, based on the preferential option for the poor, evangelisation and the promotion of justice”.

Likewise, in the formation houses of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Africa and Madagascar - some of them English-speaking and others French-speaking - **69 postulants, 40 novices and 85 scholastics** are being trained.



Realities, challenges and opportunities

Why is a representative group from RELAF meeting with Brother Superior General and his Council? **“The aim is to get closer to the grassroots, to meet Lasallians where they carry out the educational mission on a daily basis, to get to know the realities first hand”**, remarked Brother Anatole Diretenadji, a member of the General Council, at the opening of the sessions.

The African religious also asserted that “it is an ideal occasion to meet Lasallians and see how they fulfil their mission on the ground”, so that **“the group dialogues and plenaries that we will have will help us to understand not only the challenges but also the opportunities linked to the life of the mission in the Districts and the Delegation”**.

Taking part in the meeting, which will last until Friday, 17 November, are the Brother Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors, Bursars, and those responsible for the Lasallian Educational Mission (MEL) of the **Delegation of Rwanda** - which depends directly on the Institute - and the five Districts of the continent: **District of Central Africa (DAC)**, comprising Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad; **District of Madagascar**; **District of Congo-Kinshasa**; **District of West Africa (DILAO)**, comprising Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Conakry, Niger and Togo; and the **Lwanga District of Africa**, comprising Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and South Sudan.

“This gathering is an opportunity to continue the Lasallian conversations initiated by the General Council more than a year ago, to journey together, in a spirit of synodality, as the Church teaches us, in order to **strengthen the collaboration between RELAF and the Institute**”, concluded Br Anatole.







